

Promising Practice Capture Sheet

School: Fairview High School

District: Williamson County

Practice: Improving ACT scores with a focus on school culture

Point of Contact: Juli Oyer, Principal, julio@wcs.edu

☒ Rural ☒ Suburban ☐ Urban

■ Region: Mid Cumberland

Connection to Strategic Plan:

Goals:	<i>State Average of 21 Composite ACT</i>	<i>The class of 2020 will be on track to achieve 55% postsecondary completion within 6 years</i>
How best practice addresses:	Since 2011, Fairview's composite ACT score increased from a 19.9 in 2011 to a 21.6 in 2015 .	In 2014, 46 percent of graduating seniors directly enrolled in a postsecondary institution after graduation; this percentage represents a recent trend of growing postsecondary enrollment.
Priority Areas:	<i>High School Bridge to Postsecondary</i>	<i>All Means All</i>
How best practice applies:	Fairview's goal is that all students understand the impact of the ACT on postsecondary opportunities and that all students see postsecondary as a possibility. When students see postsecondary as a real option, the importance of doing well on the ACT is readily apparent.	Even though they have met the statewide goal of an average composite of 21, Fairview seeks continued growth in the percentage of students directly enrolling in postsecondary.

Practices:

- ☒ Culture ☐ Instructional ☐ Training/PD
☐ Accountability ☐ Programmatic ☐ Policy Change
☐ Funding ☐ Other:

Project Specific Indicators:

- ☐ ☐
☐ ☐

Results:

- ☒ Increased student achievement results
 ☒ ACT ☐ TNReady/EOC/TVAAS ☐ NIC ☐ EPS
☐ Decreased remediation and/or subgroup gaps
☒ Increased student readiness results (non-academic)
☒ Increased partnerships / alignment
☐ Increased participation / program growth

The Challenge:

Fairview has historically been the lowest performing high school in Williamson County. Relative to the district, Fairview has a higher rate of economically disadvantaged students and a lower percentage of parents who have completed postsecondary education. Because of the school's reputation in the community, many of the highest performing middle school students were opting into other district high schools.

More generally, there was a self-fulfilling belief throughout the community that students at Fairview could not achieve the same academic results as the other high schools in the district. The challenge faced by Principal Oyer and the faculty of Fairview has been to erode the idea that the expectations for students at Fairview should be any different than those of other schools in the district.

Parallel to the shift in mindsets around academic achievement, Fairview aspired to shift student beliefs around postsecondary. Many students and their families did not see higher education as an option for them.

The Vision:

When Principal Oyer came to Fairview four years ago, an obvious strength of the school was its sense of community: students and teachers shared strong relationships and teachers regularly went above and beyond to support their students. Principal Oyer wanted to capitalize on this aspect of the school culture to increase staff expectations for students and student aspirations for themselves.

Principal Oyer believes that her role as principal also includes being the school's "Chief Marketing Officer." She uses social media, specifically Twitter, to constantly highlight successes and engage students and the community through a medium that works for them.

Oyer saw an opportunity to translate the love and passion teachers have for their students into a stronger culture of student readiness. Fairview's vision is that caring for students means ensuring that they are prepared for postsecondary.

Summary of To-Do's:

- Offer ACT prep – a prep course is available to all juniors.
- Invest students and teachers in goals through coaching and motivation (including occasional incentives) – Fairview faculty show their support for students by cooking a pancake breakfast on the statewide ACT test date.
- Make ACT, TN Promise, and career planning integral parts of daily conversation.
- Engage the business community, local postsecondary institutions, and parents and families.
- Celebrate successes! Each class sets an ACT goal and has a choice of incentives they earn if they reach that goal (one example was a BBQ/dance party in the school parking lot).
- Increase access to rigorous coursework. Fairview has increased AP enrollment by allowing a broader range of students to enroll and coaching staff on how to support all students.

Lessons Learned:

- If something isn't working, then it is courageous and worthwhile to change it. For example, Fairview has tried different ACT prep courses, at different times of the day, to see what is most effective for students.
- All decisions should have an aligned data metric so that success or struggle can be measured and changed accordingly. Teachers use practice-ACT test data to understand student-specific strengths and needs.
- A one-message-fits-all approach does not work: all students have unique aspirations and learning styles. Positive student-teacher relationships make a powerful impact when it comes to motivating students to plan for postsecondary.

Communications:

Principal Oyer exploits every communication outlet possible – sporting events, social media, and community businesses – and regularly hosts in person meetings with parents and students. Each year, she meets with the faculty and students of Fairview's feeder middle schools to promote the opportunities for students at Fairview. Additionally, Oyer started sending letters to high-performing eighth graders of feeder middle schools to congratulate them on their academic successes and alert them to the opportunities for advanced coursework at Fairview.

Stakeholder Management:

Fairview has engaged partners throughout the community to increase opportunities for students. For example, Oyer sits on a local manufacturing council in the community to better understand local economic factors. The Williamson County Chamber of Commerce offers a "Ladder to HOPE" program in which students who increase their ACT score by 3 points or tutor another student for the ACT are allowed to keep their school-issued Chromebook. In partnership with Columbia State, Fairview is able to offer mechatronics as a CTE class (a multi-disciplinary field of engineering). Fairview partners with admission officers from local higher education institutions to host a local college fair.

Metrics & Measurements:

Baseline Data	Progress to Date	Goals
ACT Data – Average Composite 2011- 19.9 2012- 21 2013- 21.5 2014- 20.2	ACT Data – Average Composite 2015- 21.6 Postsecondary In 2014, 46 percent of graduating seniors directly enrolled in a postsecondary institution the semester after graduating.	⇒ Increase ACT composite to 22 in 2016 ⇒ Increase the number of students who seamlessly enroll in postsecondary

Resources:

- Fairview High School homepage: <http://www.wcs.edu/frvhs/>
- Fairview High School Twitter (Juli Oyer): <https://twitter.com/wcsfvhs>
- TDOE ACT Testing: <http://tn.gov/education/topic/act-sat>

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